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Business Connections
VEGA
Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance

Kazakhstan Business Connections Project

Final Report October 1, 2011 – December 31, 2014



Leader with Associate Agreement (LWA) AID-176-11-LA-11-00006

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Acronyms

BCP	Business Connections Project
CAR	Central Asian Republics
CED	Committee on Enterprise Development
DAMU	Entrepreneurship Development Fund
EDF	Economic Development Fund
KBC	Kazakhstan Business Connections
KIMEP	Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research
IESC	International Executive Service Corps
MEBP	Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning
MEDT	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
PED	Program for Economic Development
PDO	Pre-departure Orientation
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VEGA	Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance

I. Executive Summary

The Business Connections Project (BCP) was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Leader with Associate Cooperative Agreement No. EEM-A-00-04-00002-00 to the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) and was implemented through Associate Award No. AID-176-LA-11-00006 from October 1, 2011 to December 31, 2014 by the International Executive Service Corps (IESC) in partnership with CNFA and The Graduate School. The funding for the life of the program totaled \$5.1 million, of which two thirds were provided by the Government of Kazakhstan and one third by USAID under the Kazakhstan-U.S. Program for Economic Development (PED) and more than \$113,000 was cost share comprised of donated volunteer services and local contributions, exceeding the amount of cost share requested.

The project worked to build the capacity and competitiveness of Kazakhstani small and medium enterprises (SME) via three distinct, but interrelated components. Component 1 involved recruiting and deploying experts from the United States to Kazakhstan's Turan Profi and Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research University (KIMEP) to conduct business trainings on entering and navigating the U.S. market. The project developed the course curricula and delivered trainings on a variety of cross-cutting business-related courses. In collaboration with the two business training institutions, the project completed 14 business trainer assignments in Kazakhstan over the three year course of the project. As a result, 848 small- and medium- sized business owners were trained.

Component 2, the main component of the project in terms of finance, time and effort, was dedicated to leading a series of business development tours to the U.S. for Kazakhstani delegations of small- and medium-enterprise owners and high-level directors in business sectors which included agriculture, information technology, healthcare, food processing, construction, transportation and logistics, and textile and industrial manufacturing. The tours included a variety of activities, among them industry-specific training, business meetings, meeting with local authorities, roundtable seminars, and participation in trade shows. A total of 14 three-week business development tours to the U.S. took place and 166 Kazakhstani businesswomen and men, accompanied by 14 representatives from DAMU and the Enterprise Development Committee under the Ministry of Economy traveled to the U.S. during the life of the project. This surpasses the project's original goal of 160 participants. During the first year of the project, in a survey of tour participants, 68 percent reported improving their original business plans after completing the business development tour. By the last year of the project, that number rose to 83 percent of participants improving their original business plans due to their tour participation. In the second year of the project, an indicator was added to track improved management and business practices of the tour participants. Seventy percent of the tour participants reported their management and/or business practices were improved. The following year, 99 percent of tour participants reported their management and/or business practices were improved. A total of 26 business transactions between Kazakhstani SMEs and American companies were recorded during the life of the project and were valued at \$12.9 million. An additional 21 business deals are reported to be in process as the project ended.

As a result of the business development tour activities of Component 2, participants anticipate their businesses will increase sales by approximately \$15.9 million in 2015 and approximately \$109.8 million over the next five years. An additional result of this program has been the development of business connections among Kazakhstani participants, which they reported would generate an estimated \$3.8 million in sales next year and approximately \$29.9 million accumulative sales over the next five years. The Kazakhstani businesses also expect to hire more than 700 new employees in the coming year because of business expansion related to project activities.

Component 3 focused on improving and increasing the use of the Kazakhstani Entrepreneurship Development Fund (DAMU) web portal (<http://www.damu.kz/>). The site contains business-related training material and serves as a valuable resource for Kazakhstani businesses and entrepreneurs. The BCP project overhauled and assisted with redesigning the website and designed an online training program to be hosted there. Due to these activities, the website saw an 82 percent increase in traffic over the period of one year, from October 2012 to October 2013 (the end date of this activity under component 3). The business portal was created and launched by the president on December 21, 2013. Sixty-one online training videos were also created through Component 3 activities and are currently available via DAMU's youtube channel, although the videos are not currently available via DAMU's website. The videos are divided into two levels of eleven courses each and include introductions to entrepreneurship, marketing, financing, personnel management, and business information technology.

While the BCP results indicators are impressive, they do not convey the full impact of the project. One of the most significant impacts of the program was its role in helping Kazakhstani SME owners gain international exposure through the business training and business development tours. Furthermore, the project activities in each component have created spaces for Kazakhstani business owners to network not only with potential international partners, but also among themselves.

Over the life of the project, more than 40 volunteer assignments were completed by American-based business experts. Components 1 and 2 allowed Kazakhstani SME owners and directors to interact with and learn directly from American volunteer experts and gain the knowledge necessary to be more effective in the American and international markets. Many of the volunteer experts also went beyond their official scopes of work to offer assistance to the participants remotely and use their contacts to arrange meetings with relevant U.S. companies. Through these volunteer assignments and other donated services, the BCP incorporated more than \$113,000 of cost share.

II. Program Background

The Business Connections project (BCP) was implemented by the International Executive Service Corps (IESC) through the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) Leader with Associate Award (LWA) within the framework of the Kazakhstan-U.S. Program for Economic Development (PED) co-financed by USAID and Government of Kazakhstan. BCP was designed to directly support the Kazakhstani government's national development plan to diversify the economy through its "Business Roadmap 2020" program.

The main project objective was to build the capacity and competitiveness of Kazakhstani small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through their modernization and expansion. The project supported USAID Strategic Objective (SO) 4.6 and Intermediate Result (IR) 4.6.2.: Private Sector Capacity.

The project also directly supported the objectives of the PED. The Kazakhstan Ministry of the National Economy (formerly the Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning, or MEBP, and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, or MEDT) was USAID/Central Asian



The Transportation and Logistics 2014 Tour takes a break from touring Ringpower's facilities in Jacksonville, FL.

Republics' (CAR) primary government counterpart under PED. BCP was guided by the Committee on Enterprise Development (CED) under the Ministry of Regional Development. In addition to these Kazakhstani and American governmental entities, the VEGA/IESC team worked closely with a third key stakeholder in this program, the Kazakhstani Entrepreneurship Development Fund "DAMU", in achieving program goals and objectives. DAMU, a government entity similar to the U.S. Small Business Administration, is involved in the implementation and coordination of the Business Connections component of the national development plan "Road Map 2020".

The project was originally awarded to VEGA/IESC on October 1, 2011 and ended on December 31, 2014. This report covers the project's final quarter (October to December 2014) as well as serves as the final report. Quarterly data is presented first, followed by life of project details.

III. Program Activities in Quarter One, Year Four

This section reviews the activities that took place from October to December 2014. An overview of program activities and achievements can be seen in Appendix 1.

A. Component 1: Identify and Recruit Qualified Business Trainers

Component 1 provided U.S. business trainers to Kazakhstan entrepreneur training organizations or university programs. The local education partners were Turan Profi business academy and KIMEP University. The business advisors delivered trainings on entering and navigating the U.S. market. The activities that took place with this quarter (October 1 to December 31, 2014) are provided by activity and include key outcomes and challenges.

Table 1. Component 1 Activities, October 1 to December 31, 2014

Identify and Hire Qualified Business Trainers

Activity: Business development training

Mr. Al Hamman was selected from a pool of trainers by IESC. He came highly recommended by our Kazakhstani partners based on his previous performance providing similar trainings. He conducted 2 business trainings for 50 SME entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan. SME business managers in Astana received training on October 12, 2014, at Turan Profi Academy. Mr. Hamman, then traveled to Almaty to deliver a similar training on October 14, 2014, to KIMEP University entrepreneurs. Mr. Hamman's training materials are in Appendix 2.



In October 2014, Mr. Al Hamman lead a training for 50 Kazakhstani business owners in Kazakhstan. This was his sixth assignment with the project.



By working with Mr. Hamman on several assignments, the project was able improve the training while maintaining consistency.

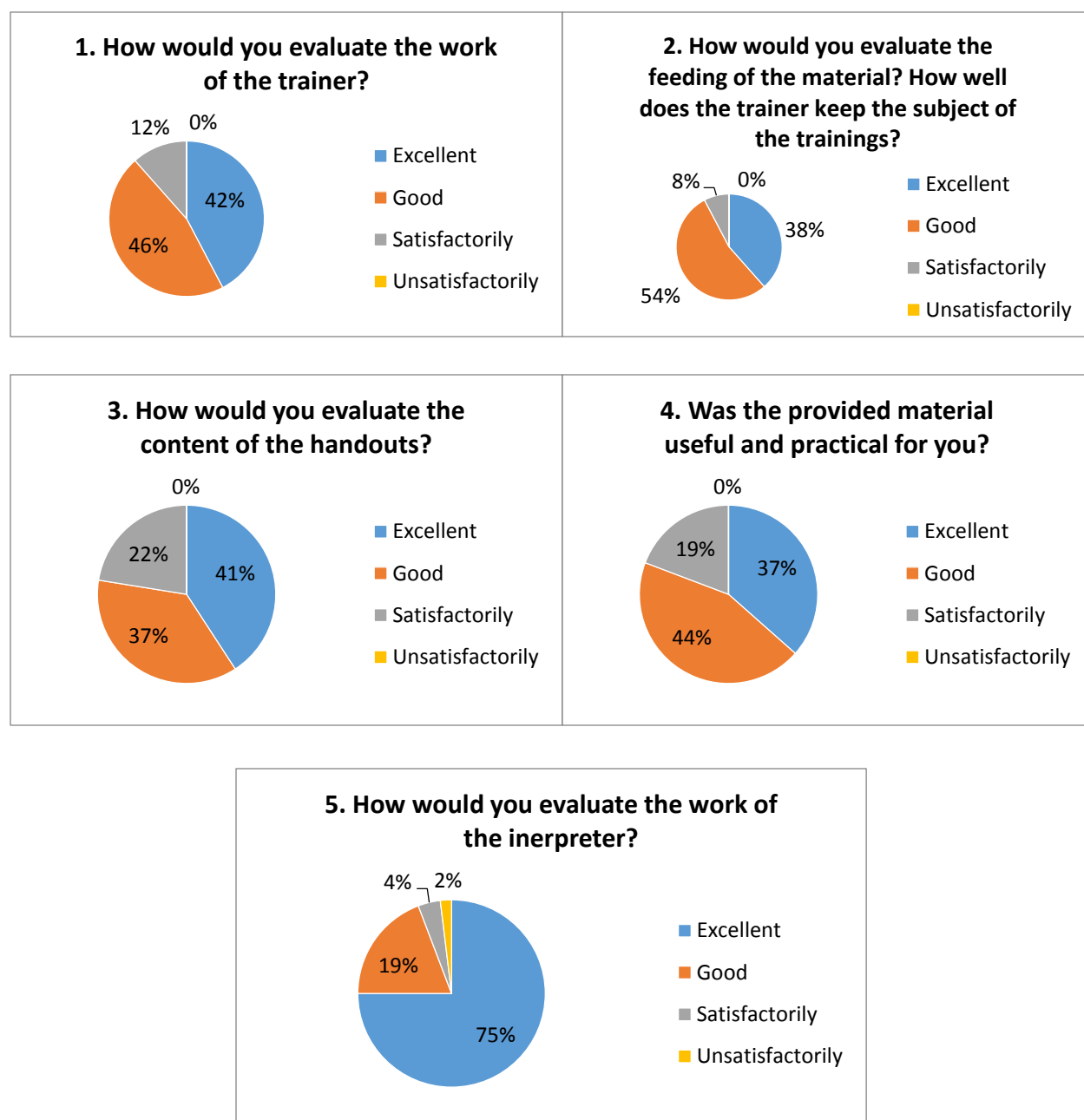
Key Outcomes

- Delivered trainings on the American business market and how to initiate contact with American companies;
- Discussed American economic climate and financial mechanisms for aiding exports from America;
- Trained 30 entrepreneurs trained Astana through Turan Profi Academy; and,
- Trained 20 entrepreneurs trained in Almaty through KIMEP University.

Challenges

- KIMEP initially postponed the time of the training without notifying VEGA/IESC.

Table 2. Results of Training Provided by Mr. Al Hamman, October 2014 (50 Respondents)



B. Component 2: Develop and Conduct Business Development Tours

The business development tours to the U.S. were designed for Kazakhstani delegations of small- and medium-enterprise owners and high-level directors in business sectors such as agriculture, information

technology, healthcare, food processing, construction, transportation and logistics, and textile and industrial manufacturing. The tours included industry specific training, business meetings, roundtable seminars, and participation in trade shows. This section provides the project's final business tours activities along with their key outcomes and challenges during the quarter. The project managed two groups related to textile and manufacturing. The project also held a business development tour alumni event during this period. The alumni event included participants from previous business development tours and supported continued Kazakhstan business-to-business connections, networking, and knowledge sharing. Please see Appendix 8 for more details on the follow up of the last three business development tours.

Table 3. Component 2 Activities, October 1 to December 31, 2014

Develop and Conduct Business Development Tours Participant Selection for Textile and Manufacturing Sector
<p>Activity: Participant Selection VEGA/IESC prepared two business development tours, which were delivered simultaneously in the fall of 2014. One tour was for participants in the textile manufacturing sector and the other was in the industrial manufacturing sector. The participants arrived in the U.S. on October 31 and departed on November 21, 2014. Preparation for the tours began in July and are included here for relevant documentation of the process, including a pre-departure orientation, which was hosted by the U.S. embassy prior to the participants' tour. Please see the complete itineraries for both tours in Appendix 3 and 4, and the Russian translation in Appendix 5 and 6 respectively.</p> <p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted interviews in July 2013, from which 21 finalists were chosen; • Separated the finalist into 2 groups consisting of 12 participants for the textile manufacturing sector and 9 participants for the industrial manufacturing sector. The groups were created based on participants' interests. The groups were smaller than our previous groups (of 15 -16) to allow for more individual attention based on previous feedback from participants and Government of Kazakhstan feedback through Committee observation reports; • Collected and prepared the DS 2019 forms for the two groups (passport copies, photos, DS-160 forms, conditions of sponsorship, terms and conditions, and risk assumption). • Completed SRFI and Biodata forms and submitted the data to USAID's TraiNet/VCS system; and, • Requested additional information listing all the requirements and expectations from both groups' participants to make their business development tour more productive. <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant cancelled due to personal reasons. There was not sufficient time to replace that individual with another participant.
<p>Activity: Visa Interviews Documents were prepared for submission of the DS2019 forms and visa interviews were conducted for the two groups. The two accompanying representatives from DAMU were</p>

chosen to attend each tour.

Key Outcomes

- Organized U.S. visa interviews for the two groups' participants on October 22. All 20 participants arrived on time and successfully received approval for their visas;
- Organized visa interviews for accompanying DAMU representatives on October 10 at the Consulate General of the U.S. in Almaty. They received their visas on October 11.
- Confirmed all participants received J1 visas on October 23, 2014.

Challenges

- Not all of the group members confirmed attendance via email as requested. IESC called individuals to confirm attendance.
- Not all the participants read and understood instructions. They called and asked questions, which were answered over the phone and confirmed via email by IESC project staff.

Activity: Pre-departure Orientation

VEGA/IESC, in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy and USAID, conducted a pre-departure orientation for the groups and a DAMU representative at the U.S. Embassy in Astana on October 23, 2014.



All 20 participants of the Textile and Industrial Manufacturing tour participated in the pre-departure orientation.

Key Outcomes

- Completed orientation for all 20 participants. Updated and translated handout materials were distributed;
- Shared first-hand experience from a business development tour alumnus from the transport and logistics group;
- The alumni coordinator from the U.S. Embassy delivered a presentation on potential opportunities for the group after the completion of their tour.

Challenges

- Not all the participants read the handouts. Several participants called the project team shortly before the day of departure and asked questions that were addressed in the handouts.
- One of the DAMU representatives was unable to attend the pre-departure orientation. She received all the pre-departure orientation materials via email.



The tour participants were able to get to know one another before departing to the U.S.

Activity: Business Development Tour Conducted

Detailed programs and tour itineraries for the two groups were prepared, distributed, and reviewed. The business development tours were conducted concurrently from October 31 – November 21, 2014.

Key Outcomes

- Delivered a textile manufacturing business development tour for eleven participants and one DAMU representative, which included activities in Washington, DC, Atlanta, GA, Los Angeles, CA, and San Francisco, CA;
- Delivered an industrial manufacturing business development tour for nine participants and one DAMU representative, which included activities in Washington, DC; Atlanta, GA; Charlotte, NC; New York, NY; and Cleveland and Akron, Ohio;
- Participated in the FABTECH Expo in Atlanta, GA. Potential business connections between tour participants and U.S. companies were identified and targeted; and,



In November 2014, Tour participants from the Textile Manufacturing group visited a Paper Source in Maryland and talked with staff members about their business.



In November 2014 the Industrial Manufacturing tour participants saw how American facilities operate and learn new businesses skills to take back to Kazakhstan.

- Planned and supported participant Mr. Roman Chernyshev's travel to Memphis, TN to visit the company, AOC Resins on November 11, 2014. Substantive talks were held about a potential partnership.

Challenges

- Participants continued to represent diverse areas of interest within their respective sectors, which made it challenging to arrange meetings relevant to the group as a whole.
 - The businesses that the participants represented were also divergent in terms of their size and their experience in international business.
- VEGA/IESC organized the participants into two groups in order to mitigate this challenge. For example, paper/engraving and printing business people were placed within the same group. Manufacturing/production business representatives were placed in the second group.
- Some industries represented are not prevalent in the U.S., for example shoe and fur manufacturing. For shoes, based on our preparation research, much of the advanced manufacturing equipment is developed outside the U.S. Very little of the equipment sought is actually designed or manufactured in the U.S. any longer.
 - Participants were absent from their businesses for more than three weeks, leading to a loss of productivity and lack of follow-through with the businesses they met with while in the U.S. when they returned home. We previously recommended two weeks business connections tours and given the feedback, this recommendation should be considered for future programming.

Alumni Networking Event in Almaty on December 10, 2014

Activity: Alumni Networking Event

VEGA/IESC project team conducted an alumni networking event in Almaty on

December 10, 2014. Alumni who attended the event represented each year of the project including participants from the Food Processing group, Healthcare group, and IT group from 2012, the Transportation and Logistics group, Construction group, and Healthcare group from 2013, and the IT and textile manufacturing groups from 2014.

Alumni also had a chance to interact with the DAMU representative for the Industrial

Manufacturing group, Mr. Serik Khamidulla and with Economic Officer at U.S. Consulate General, Mr. John Gray. Many alumni from the healthcare sector spoke with Mr. Gray about how to certify medical instruments and import them into Kazakhstan from U.S. partners that they met during their business connections tour.



In December 2014, the Alumni Networking Event gave former tour participants the opportunity to re-connect with other participants and with the VEGA/IESC staff.

Key Outcomes

- Held alumni event attended by 30 business development tour alumni from different cities including Almaty, Astana, Pavlodar, Taraz, Atyrau, and Karaganda. The alumni thanked the project for its efforts;
- Provided an opportunity for alumni to network and discuss their successes and best practices for following up after the conclusion of the tour;
- Provided a forum for alumni to share updates on their achievements related to their respective trips. Some highlights include the creation of a small business association by members of the textile manufacturing group and a participant who had her product patented;
- Reviewed with alumni their experience during the business development tour and alumni reported that both the tour and the alumni event helped them find new partners and friends among their respective groups. They found it helpful to interact with alumni from previous years and to make new connections in Kazakhstan.
- The Alumni Booklet details the achievements and feedback from the tour participants for the life of the project. Please see the English Version in Appendix 11 and the Russian translation in Appendix 12.



At the alumni networking event, tour participants discussed new developments in their businesses since the tour.

Challenges

- Some alumni who confirmed attendance did not attend, while others who were not registered in advance attended the event.

C. Component 3: Expansion and Enhancement of DAMU Web Portal

Based on a request from DAMU, IESC made suggestions for carrying out a comparative analysis of the third component of the project, the distance-learning initiative. The comparative analysis is fundamental to understanding qualifications, advantages, and further development of the initiative by comparing it to other existing online distance-learning platforms. The suggestions include developing reading materials, video materials, a list of comparable initiatives and certifications, and technical recommendations. IESC provided the following list of suggestions to the DAMU team for further exploration.

Suggested Video Materials
Stanford University http://ecorner.stanford.edu/authorMaterialInfo.html?mid=2920 http://ecorner.stanford.edu/authorMaterialInfo.html?mid=2668
Coursera offers dozens of courses on entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, and business administration. The courses are free of charge, but require enrollment. The format of the learning happens through video streaming with additional reading materials and assignments: https://www.coursera.org
Linda.com is a large resource of online courses and trainings. It requires a membership. http://www.lynda.com/Business-training-tutorials/29-0.html?bnr=NMHP_blocks

Suggested Reading Materials
MIT- Series of courses and trainings related to entrepreneurship and business planning: http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/entrepreneurship/
Carnegie Mellon University- Entrepreneurship and Business Planning course: http://www.talkshoe.com/se/professorjuliano/materials.html

Certificates and Degrees in Entrepreneurship
Duke University: http://entrepreneurship.duke.edu/

D. Project Management

During the project's final quarter, VEGA/IESC home office and project staff prepared for project close-out, which included a field assignment by the program manager to work with the field staff on IESC standard close out procedures and processes.

Table 4. Project Management Activities October 1 to December 31, 2014

VEGA/IESC Team Prepares for Project Closeout
<p>Activity: Project Home-office Closeout Assignment</p> <p>In preparation for conclusion of the project on December 31, 2014, VEGA/IESC field staff and home-office program manager prepared for closing down in-country operations.</p> <p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fielded to Astana Home-office Program Manager Judy Oliver to help with close-out procedures and to attend the alumni networking event in Almaty on December 10, 2014.• Met briefly with the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. Michael Klecheski to discuss the project. Ms. Oliver also met with USAID colleagues AOR Ms. Lora Kudaibergenova and Mr. Nils Bergeson. She also provided the Economic Officer Mr. John Gray from the U.S. Consulate a review of project results. The project shared alumni contact information for their future involvement in U.S. State Department Alumni events.• Shipped project-related files to IESC's headquarters in Washington, DC, for storage. The project team began the disposition of office furniture and supplies to three other USAID projects (USAID KCCMP, USAID MEP, USAID/UNDP CRW) and one local NGO, National Volunteer Network.• Transferred all extra copies of project applications and selection materials to a paper disposal organization in Astana called Kazakhstan Waste Recycling. <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementing activities for the project did not end until December 10, 2014; therefore, closeout activities had to be conducted under a shortened timeframe.

IV. Life of Project Activities and Outputs

A. Component 1: Identify and Recruit Qualified Business Trainers

Under contract with the Kazakhstan Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Turan Profi provides ten day industry-specific as well as cross-cutting business training to 848 trainees, delivered by both foreign (including German and U.S. trainers) and Kazakhstani technical experts and trainers. In year one, Turan Profi requested the resumes of up to 40 U.S. business trainers to International Academy of Turan Profi in Kazakhstan. The initial request and review process between the project and Turan Profi lacked a clear, identification process to determine required skills, relevant background, and training experience. Together, Turan Profi and the project team established procedures for the identification and hiring of business trainers. A step-by-step methodology was finalized and used to clarify and manage the process. The project used all sources to identify viable and relevant candidates, including from within IESC's proprietary Skills Bank Database. During the project's first year, 28 business trainers were proposed to and reviewed by Turan Profi with 7 trainers selected to deliver business trainings in Almaty and Astana to a total of 298 trainees.

A Dedicated Consultant Builds Rapport with Entrepreneurs

Over the life of the project, Mr. Al Hamman travelled to Kazakhstan six times to provide business trainings related to the project's Component 1. Each time he made his way to both Astana and Almaty to conduct the training sessions. As a marketing communication consultant, Mr. Hamman has worked with a variety of domestic and foreign companies providing product development, package design, advertising, marketing, public relations, trade show promotion, direct mail and corporate communications support services. His expertise was valuable to participating Kazakhstani businesses owners interested in expanding to the international markets, like the U.S. Our education partners noted how Mr. Hamman was surrounded by students during the breaks, "he couldn't even get a cup of tea without several students asking him follow up questions," a training observer noted from Turan Profi. "Throughout the day, he would adjust some of the activities or information in response to the audience's business interest and questions." Mr. Hamman's global experience and background qualified him as the business trainer and his love for Kazakhstan kept him coming back.

"I enjoyed my work with Kazakhstani entrepreneurs. They did have a lot of questions and each time, I felt my trainings included more relevant information than the last as I made adjustments and improvements along the way," Al stated, reflecting on his time spent with project beneficiaries.

Evaluations for Mr. Hamman's trainings revealed the Kazakhstani participants were highly satisfied with the content he had created and the academic institutions, continually praised his work. In the end, Mr. Hamman led training sessions for 450 Kazakhstani entrepreneurs.



Al Hamman speaking to a classroom of promising Kazakhstani entrepreneurs.

During year two, Turan Profi, under their agreement with DAMU, began a new cycle of training in the third quarter. In 2013, the training contract had to be re-competed to select a new training provider. This was due to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) being re-organized into the Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning (MEBP) in early 2013 and changing its oversight procedures for the contract. The DAMU committee oversight was moved to the also newly formed Ministry of Regional Development. Responsibility for reviewing the business training tendering process also transitioned to DAMU. The VEGA / IESC team provided consultations for DAMU's Economic Development Fund (EDF) and provided information regarding its previous work with trainers in 2012. The changes in roles and oversight caused a delay; nevertheless, VEGA/IESC was able to send one trainer, Mr. Al Hamman, in year two (see text box).

In year three, Mr. Hamman continued to provide his technical services to the project by completing four business trainings in Kazakhstan, which reached a total of 350 Kazakhstani participants. VEGA/IESC also recruited Mr. Gary Mutz to conduct business trainings in year three. Mr. Mutz trained 50 entrepreneurs, bringing the total Kazakhstani trainees to 400. The VEGA/ IESC trainers not only worked with Turan Profi, but also with KIMEP University to expand the business trainings during year three.

Including the last project quarter, detailed in the previous section, Component 1 identified and deployed a total of 14 business trainers in Kazakhstan and trained a total of 848 Kazakhstanis small- and medium-enterprise owners.

B. Component 2: Develop and Conduct Business Development Tours

Over the entire project period, 14 business development tours took place for 166 participants in the healthcare, information technology, livestock, agriculture, food, construction, bakery/grain, transportation & logistics, and textile and industrial manufacturing industries. The planning and

implementation of the business development tours included several stages and the collaboration of stakeholders both in Kazakhstan and the U.S. The steps were as follows:

1. *Application.* Potential participants whom had received DAMU sponsored business trainings through Nazarbayev University, Turan Profi, or KIMEP University submit their application. A selection committee reviewed the applicants against an agreed upon set of criteria and timeline.
2. *Initial screening.* The project staff sends all applications with their business plans to a volunteer expert readers' panel in the U.S. Within one week the American business volunteers review all applications. The readers' panel develops a list of recommended applicants to be interviewed in Kazakhstan. The readers' panel was not originally planned in the design of the project, but formed as a result of a MEDT recommendation. This readers' panel evaluates the application and candidates based on how their individual applications were scored.
3. *Selection.* The project staff in Kazakhstan form a selection committee where MEDT, USAID, DAMU, Turan Profi, and sectorial experts are invited to conduct individual interviews with recommended candidates. Interviews took place both in Almaty and Astana for the convenience of applicants traveling to the interview at their own expense. The selection committee determined candidates, ideally within a specific sector, for inclusion in a business development tour in the U.S.
4. *Informing potential participant.* The project staff in Kazakhstan inform the finalists and starts the visa process, including collection of all necessary documents. Participants were provided J1 visa support by the project. Turan Profi, in consultation with the VEGA/IESC staff, then provides participants with round trip airfare arrangements to the U.S.
5. *Developing sector-specific itinerary.* In concurrence with Step 4, the project team in Washington, DC designs a business development tours responsive to the sector and individual requests or business profile of the participants. This entails choosing the city destinations within the U.S., recruiting a business trainer for the first week of the tour, arranging meetings for the tour participants with American companies, associations and the Embassy of Kazakhstan, researching relevant trade shows, organizing the lodging and transportation within the U.S., and confirming travel insurance for each participant.
6. *Pre-departure orientation.* The project organizes a pre-departure orientation (PDO) for all participants, ideally two weeks before the departure date. USAID, MEDT, and DAMU representatives participate in the PDO. The project team explains the details and requirements of the J1 visa, as well as the importance of their DS 2019 form and I-94 immigration card. Participants are briefed about their upcoming program and receive information about companies they are to meet, as well as key contacts in the U.S. Participants sign the Terms and Conditions regarding their participation and receive the pre-departure guide.
7. *The tour begins.* VEGA/IESC and CNFA, another VEGA member and sub-partner on the project with a specialization in agricultural business development tours, led this aspect of Component 2. The approach to implementation of the business development tours is driven by the Kazakhstani government's interest in practical outcomes. Examples include contracts on purchase of equipment to modernize and improve technology that enhances quality and productivity and the establishment of joint ventures, distribution rights, or official representative status between U.S. and Kazakhstan businesses.

8. *Follow up.* Many of the deals may take several months or more than a year depending upon the parameters of the connection (distributor relationship versus a one-time purchase; sample purchase versus a large capital expenditure). The project held regular alumni events to share success stories among beneficiaries, discuss strategies, and encourage further networking via Kazakhstan-to-Kazakhstan business cooperation, which was often nurtured during the shared three-week business development experience.

The table below includes the group names, tour lengths, numbers of participants per tour, and itineraries:

Table 5. List of Business Development Tour for Life of Project

#	Group Name	Length	Number of participants	Itinerary
1	Health Care	May 20–June 8, 2012	10	DC – Illinois – Indiana – North Carolina – New-York
2	Information Technologies	July 15–August 3, 2012	14	DC – Massachusetts – Texas – Nevada
3	Livestock (CNFA group)	September 10–30, 2012	8	Nebraska – Kansas - DC
4	Agriculture/ Plant growth (CNFA group)	October 14 – November 3, 2012	9	Georgia – South Carolina – North Carolina – Virginia – DC
5	Food Industry	October 13 – November 3, 2012	16	DC – Pennsylvania – Michigan - Illinois
6	Construction	May 17–June 7, 2013	13	DC – South Carolina – Texas - California
7	Grain/Bakery (CNFA group)	June 1-22, 2013	11	Florida – Kansas – Illinois – DC
8	Transportation and Logistics	July 19–August 9, 2013	12	DC – Tennessee – Pennsylvania – New York – Massachusetts
9	Health Care	October 18– November 8, 2013	13	DC – Minnesota – Illinois – Tennessee
10	Information Technologies	February 14–March 7, 2014	10	DC – Texas–Washington–California
11	Transportation and Logistics	May 30–June 20, 2014	15	DC – Illinois – Wisconsin – Florida - Georgia
12	Food Industry	September 19– October 10, 2014	14	DC – Louisiana – Missouri – Nevada
13	Textile Manufacturing industry	October 31– November 21, 2014	11	DC – Georgia – California
14	Industrial Manufacturing industry	October 31- November 21, 2014	9	DC – Georgia – North Carolina – New York – Ohio
Total			166	

During the first year, the project designed and facilitated three business development tours to the United States. These trips included a total of 32 representatives from Kazakhstani small and medium enterprises. The sectors covered in year one included healthcare, information technology, and livestock (implemented by CNFA).

During year two, the project completed five business development tours to the United States. The 62 businesspersons represented diverse sectors such as food industry, construction, and transportation and logistics, as well as one agriculture and one grain/bakery group (implemented by agriculture partner CNFA.)

During year three, the project designed and completed four business development tours to the United States. The 51 participants represented businesses in healthcare, information technology, transportation and logistics, and food industry sector.

And finally, during the last quarter of the project (October to December 2014), two business development tours to the United States were completed. Business owners and representatives from 20 different enterprises in the textile and industrial manufacturing sector participated. For a complete list of tour participants, please see Appendix 7.

Impact through the eyes of beneficiaries.

Starting in July 2014, the project team conducted a survey that aimed to reach 132 alumni-to-date of the business connection tours. Initially in July, of the 132, 88 percent or 117 alumni, participated in the survey representing a significant sampling. After the last three tours were completed in the food and textile and manufacturing sectors, the project received 24 more responses for a total of 141 responses to the survey.

Most of the participants completed the online survey on their own, while follow up and quality assurance checks were collected via phone calls by the project staff. The survey focused on participant investments, formal business connections, and processing observations or



Tour participants from the Grain/Bakery 2013 group learn new techniques in the industry during a visit to Kansas State University.



The Healthcare Sector Business Development Tour in 2013 visited various health-related agencies and associations in Washington, DC, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Memphis to discuss new innovations in the healthcare sector.

innovations gathered from their respective business tour. The alumni provided estimates on what they as business owners or high-level managers expect to see resulting from these investments and changes in the near and medium-term future.

Alumni reported buying new equipment to improve their businesses or create new products or services; establishing formal business relationships in the form of an official representative or distributor; and observing new business processes that when adapted to their own business improved efficiency and quality. They also met other Kazakhstani businesses, and

in many cases, found ways to collaborate or work together when they returned to Kazakhstan. Survey respondents report that these changes do or will increase their sales and allow them to hire new employees.

In just 3 years, a \$5.1 million project supported by the government of Kazakhstan and USAID has resulted in Kazakhstani SMEs completing business deals (capital investments aimed at modernizing or expanding services) valued at \$12.9 million and improving business practices with about \$3.5 million in anticipated savings overall. The tour alumni anticipate that as a result of these changes and investments their businesses will expand by a total of approximately \$15.9 million in anticipated sales next year and approximately \$109.8 million accumulative sales in the next 5 years. An unintended, positive consequence of this project has been the Kazakhstani-to-Kazakhstani business connections developed among participants, which they reported would generate an estimated \$3.8 million in sales next year and approximately \$29.9 million accumulative sales in the next 5 years. The Kazakhstani businesses also expect to hire more than 700 new employees in the coming year because of related business expansion. For a complete list of the success deals, see Appendix 13.

About 96 percent of respondents rated the tours as “productive” in helping to improve their businesses. In addition, about 56 percent gained business contacts or prospective partners.

Twenty percent bought product(s) to improve their businesses because of tour participation from such companies as Purewave, Opinionmeter, EC Boston, LC Technologies Inc., the GSI group, Magnum Research Corporation, and others. Capital investments included computer software, computer-integrated telephone and internet equipment, measuring equipment, controllers, automotive equipment, concrete bays for road construction, medical equipment including eye-tracking technology, and computer equipment for people with disabilities.

Seventeen percent of respondents signed contracts or reached formal agreements with U.S. businesses. Types of agreements varied from becoming distributors/dealerships to authorized representatives. These respondents estimated that on average, these deals will help their business grow by about \$2 million next year. Nearly 68 percent reported an additional non-monetary value of these contracts. Non-monetary areas of positive influence included adopting an American style of doing business, rethinking marketing strategies and instruments, and increasing the number of employees in new areas of the business.

For those that have not purchased equipment, signed a contract, or completed formal agreements yet, about 32 percent expect to do so in the next year. The project ended in December 2014, but VEGA/IESC project team shared the contact information of all alumni with DAMU so that DAMU may do a survey in mid-or-late 2015 to track new deals. The potential types of business connections reported included purchasing equipment, establishing a joint venture or distributorship, providing transport support with an American company in Kazakhstan, and representing an American company in the Kazakhstani market.

Out of those that signed contracts, about 63 percent said they did not encounter any challenges negotiating or completing the deal while about 26 percent said they did. Eleven percent did not pursue a

Alumni Secures Patent – Soups on!

During her first week on the business development tour, businesswomen Galiya Utebekova made a connection with the business training and an enterprising idea. An idea about a soup, an idea about nutrition, and how they could come together has a product she can develop and sell.

During the business training, volunteer trainer, Mr. Harold Handley discussed the importance and value of patents as related to global markets. Ms. Utebekova recalled that it was then, in November 2012, that she got her the idea to pursue the patent. Upon her return to Kazakhstan, Ms. Utebekova obtained a patent for a type of soup called *gelatiniform broth-sorpa* in December 2013.

Her proposal was approved and supported by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). They paid for 50 percent of the market research costs. Ms. Utebekova started conducting research at a Nutrition Academy and she already has orders for large consignments once production begins. At the time of this

contract. Some of the challenges included the following: a difference in mentality or approach to contracting; different conditions of contracts or agreements; differences in legal framework or trade governing policies; or difficulty finding an interpreter with a proficient knowledge of technical terminology.

Over 79 percent of respondents are adapting business processes observed while on the tour. For example, entrepreneurs improved their business plans, implemented American management systems and saved funds as a result. Participants optimized various working processes, changed their marketing and manufacturing systems, and improved relationships among the employees. Some of them designed and implemented new projects or even established a new company as a result of the business connections tour. For those that have already instituted these processes, about 91 percent said that the new processes improved their business efficiency, resulting in average savings of about \$45,728 in a 12-month period.

About 61 percent established business connections within their tour groups and 91 percent of them said that their Kazakhstani-to-Kazakhstani connections have helped them improve their businesses. See Appendix 10 for more details on how the tour participants are working together to improve the business environment in Kazakhstan.

A summary of the Business Development Tours can be found in Appendix 9 in Russian.

C. Component 3: Expansion and Enhancement of DAMU Web Portal

The DAMU Entrepreneurship Development Program website (<http://www.damu.kz/>) is a corporate website of the DAMU fund, maintained by the Kazakhstan government. The website serves as a resource for Kazakhstani businesses and entrepreneurs. The site contains business related content, issues regular announcements, and possess educational information for existing and potential entrepreneurs. The Graduate School USA (formerly Graduate School U.S. Department of Agriculture), a non-profit education institution, provided extensive technical assistance to support this activity under the VEGA/IESC agreement. The team's approach was to work collaboratively with the DAMU specialists from their facilities, build their capacity throughout the activity, and ensure ownership and management of the work by DAMU halfway through the second year of the program.



DAMU staff members collaborated with IESC staff and with the Graduate School to enhance the DAMU web portal.

IESC's public relations manager, Gayane Dallakyan, completed an in-depth assessment of the DAMU website in year one. Recommendations included improving the design and functionality of the website, creating on-line training materials, and expanding access to these materials. The recommendations were provided in the following five reports:

- Assessment and Analytics of DAMU.KZ Website
- DKB2020 Recommendations for New Website Design
- DAMU.KZ Website Improvement Recommendations
- E-Learning Software Interfaces and Perspectives Suggestions
- DKN2020 Benchmarking Ideas

The recommendations were incorporated in an action plan. After a comprehensive review of the assessment, reports, and several briefing sessions with the public relations manager and relevant DAMU staff, the Graduate School's online course designer, Mr. D'mitri Sobol, traveled to Almaty, Kazakhstan, in September 2012 to begin work with DAMU on the action plan.

As the designer, Mr. Sobol reviewed the existing workflow and desired outcomes. During his in-country assignment, he conducted meetings with key individuals, including DAMU's Director of International Cooperation and Distance Consulting Department Ms. Zaire Masgutova, USAID Project Management Specialist Economic Development Ms. Lora Kudaibergenova, BCP Chief of Party Ms. Gaukhar Yessentayeva, and DAMU's Web Developer Mr. Kamal Mamedov. A key outcome of that trip was the selection of the Bitrix platform for the development of the online training application.

During the second year of the project, the Component 3 advisors worked remotely to prepare the technical requirements for the Online Business Training Program. Lecture materials from DAMU EDF were adapted for the program. Advisors Ms. Gayane Dallakyan and Mr. D'mitri Sobol undertook in-country assignments in April, June, and September 2013 to complete the work with DAMU personnel directly and ensure a smooth transition per the activity's sustainability approach.

DAMU educational materials were formatted into lecture scripts to be used as courses [in](#) DAMU's Online Training Program. These materials were submitted to DAMU to be translated into the Kazakh language. Following their translation, volunteers from the local Kazakh diaspora in Washington, D.C. worked with DAMU, Mr. Sobol and The Graduate School to record these materials so the videos could be included on the DAMU website and YouTube channel. The training program was divided into two levels of lectures. [Each](#) level is divided into 11 courses. A total of 61 videos were created. The first level included introductory materials in areas such as entrepreneurship, marketing, financing, personnel management, and business information technology. The second level built on the knowledge shared in the first level and delved deeper into how to be a successful entrepreneur. Both levels of the lectures were recorded in Russian and Kazakh and are currently available on the DAMU youtube channel, although the videos have not been uploaded to DAMU's website at this time. See Appendix **Error! Reference source not found.** for a complete list and description of the Online Training Program.

Over the second year, the DAMU website saw an 82 percent increase of unique visitors out of which 1,135 downloaded project-related materials including agendas of previous business development tours, application forms, lists of participants, and other documents. Key results from year two are outlined below:

Table 6. Component 3 Results

Onsite Optimizations	According to the plan, 17 main landing pages on DAMU.kz have been optimized by meta tags. Content optimization by keywords and calls to actions will take place at a later stage upon availability of resources. However, all the recommendations related to onsite optimization were considered during new web portal design (See the report DKB2020 Follow-up Evaluation 2013).
Offsite Link Building	DAMU contracted the work out to a company, which implemented offsite link building and campaigns and increased numbers of quality referrals, new visitor acquisitions to DAMU.kz.
Offline Campaigns	Developments at DAMU were publicized, among which were opening of 15 more Centers for Entrepreneurship Development and mobile centers in five regions. The events were broadcasted, flyers were distributed containing DAMU.kz.
Site Surveys	9 site surveys have been implemented among DAMU.kz visitors. 10th now's being run on the site.

Google Analytics configurations

In order to evaluate the website according to the goals and outcomes, Google Analytics event tracking code was implemented on action buttons on the DAMU.kz website, such as submitting the form, downloading materials.

In year three of the project, the Graduate School completed the implementation of the third component of the project. Consultants provided final materials and recommendations including documents on mobile marketing for DAMU EDF, Dkb2020.KZ website improvements, 13 portal designs with optimization process conversion, and internal audit manual of the site.

DAMU also used recommendations and training received in 2012 and 2013 to develop a new website, www.business.gov.kz with resources for small and medium enterprises. The website was launched in December 2013.

V. Final Performance Monitoring Data

This section presents the indicators, targets, and results per year for each component of BCP. It also includes a set of USAID standard indicators. These results include year four achievements; however, no targets were set for this project in year four. The indicator table has been separated out, so that the achievements of the project can be explained. A condensed indicator table for the life of the project can be found in Appendix 14.

A. Component 1: Identify and Recruit Qualified Business Trainers

Indicator No.	Component 1 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
1.1	Number of U.S. trainers deployed to conduct business training at Education Institute	40*	7*	5	1	2	5	1	14

** The target of 40 originally set by the program was for candidates proposed, not deployed. The indicator was revised in Year 2 to better reflect the input expected by the partner and improve the efficiency of the trainer identification and deployment. The Year 1 Actual reflects number of trainers deployed; 28 candidates were submitted to the training partner for review.*

In year one of project, Component 1 indicator was monitored by the “number of trainers proposed to Kazakhstani training institute/ universities.” As such the number of trainers proposed (not deployed) was initially established as 40 potential candidates. After submitting 28 candidates and fielding 7 trainers, it was determined with the counterpart and USAID that this activity could be more efficient moving forward. Clear profiles of trainers articulated in a scope of work were developed, from which VEGA/IESC submitted a limited number of experienced and trusted trainers directly responsive to that profile and scope. This new process avoided sending in a large number of resumes, all of which would need to be reviewed. This revised process changed the indicator to number of U.S. trainers deployed versus proposed.

Unfortunately, in year two of the project, the education partner selection was not completed until the end of the year. Turan Profi was chosen again, but not until the fourth quarter of that fiscal year allowing time for only one deployment instead of the targeted five trainers initially envisioned. Turan Profi agreed to a scope of work for a business trainer in August 2013. Shortly after, a business trainer conducted a training in September 2013. Nevertheless, the year two planned trainer deployments did take place the following fiscal year and the last quarter of the program for a total of 14 trainers deployed. In total 848 students received training from 14 business advisor assignments.

B. Component 2: Develop and Conduct Business Development Tours

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
2.1	Number of firms receiving USG assistance by participating in business training and/or business development tours to improve their management practices	32	32	76	62	66	52	20	166

During year one, Turan Profi did not have the anticipated funding to purchase tickets for the tour groups at the beginning of the program as originally designed. The project was not able to send any groups until May 2012. As a result, it was necessary to implement two tours simultaneously in October 2012 to meet the target number of firms receiving assistance by participants the business development tour.

In year two, a healthcare group tour, which included 13 participants, was being planned for October 2013 in the following fiscal year. This choice was made so that the group could attend a relevant expo in Minnesota. Therefore the targets for year two were completed in year three of the project.

In year three, four business development tours took place to the U.S. Two tours took place simultaneously at the end of 2014, one month before the end of the project.

In some cases, invited participants were not able to attend the tour due to personal reasons. This contributed to the decrease in numbers of firms receiving assistance in this indicator. Overall, 166 businesses participated in the business development tours during the life of the project.

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
2.2	Number of female representatives from firms receiving USG assistance by participating in business training and/or business development tours to improve their management practices	16	13	27	19	23	20	6	58

Of the 166 participants, 58 were women equaling approximately 35 percent of the business development tour beneficiaries. The selection's committee primary task was to selected the strongest candidates in each sector and could not afford to select based on gender. In most application reviews, more male candidates applied than females so there was a shallow selection pool for female candidates.

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
2.3	Number of male representatives from firms receiving USG assistance by participating in business training and/or business development tour to improve their management practices	16	19	49	43	43	32	14	108

Of the 166 participants, 108 were men equaling approximately 65 percent of the business development tour beneficiaries.

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
2.4	Percent of participants' original business plans are improved after the participant completes the business development tour to the United States	75%	68%	75%	70%	85%	83%	No data available	N/A

The direct impact on the beneficiaries' business planning was expected to improve over time as the project matured, and it did. The increased targets and results reflect adjustments to the program in terms of training strategy and communication and responding to participant and stakeholder observational feedback. It also was in part due to a growing pool of more sophisticated and interested participants as more business entrepreneurs became aware of the program and saw the potential value for their businesses. Finally, the increase reflected adjustments made by business trainers and the good support of the Kazakhstan Embassy, which both gained a better understanding of each subsequent groups' needs. The two tours in year four ended on November 21, 2014. This did not give sufficient time to assess and measure the tour's impact on their business plans.

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
2.5	Percent of female participants' original business plans improved after the participant completes the business development tour to the United States	75%	63%	75%	63%	85%	78%	No data available	N/A

Over time, the percentage of female participants did increase; however, it fell below the anticipated target. Further analysis would need to be completed to determine why this was the case. The variables could include size of business, number of years in business, existing international business connections, role related to business plan development, or a need for specific program elements that focus more on the needs of women business owners or managers. None of the groups represented a majority-female participant pool. For future programming, it may be worth considering some business development tours focused specifically on women business owners or managers. Because the two tours in year four ended on November 21, 2014, again, there was not sufficient time to access and measure the tour's impact on their business plans.

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
2.6	Percent of business development tour participants confirm that information gained and/or connections made during the business development tour contributed to the implementation of their business expansion plans	80%	92%	80%	86%	90%	80%	No data available	N/A

Not enough time has passed for the participants in the year three tours to implement the knowledge they gained. The project would expect the percentage to increase over time. The two tours in year four ended on November 21, 2014; which was not sufficient time to access and measure the tour's impact on this element of the programming.

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
2.7	Percent of female business	80%	82%	80%	96%	90%	93.75%	No data available	N/A

	development tour participants confirm that information gained and/or connections made during the business development tour contributed to the implementation of their business expansion plans							e	
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The difference between Indicator 2.5, women using new information as part of a business plan, versus 2.7 here is interesting and may inform future programming. Here, women participants were very likely to actually use the information gained at the business even if it was not formally incorporated into a business plan. Unfortunately, without further analysis this remains speculative. The two tours in year four ended on November 21, 2014; which was not sufficient time to access and measure the tour's impact on this element of the programming.

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual	Total
2.8	Number of firms participating in Business Connections sign contracts on the purchase of equipment and/or invest in improved technologies or establish licensing deals to exchange information/skills or technology	20	3	5	8	5	5	9*	26

**The signed contract or deal may not have taken place during this quarter, but was only disclosed to the project in Quarter 1 Year 4.*

The project began to see an uptick in the number of individuals purchases starting in year two; nevertheless, the actual deals made was limited to 26. It is worth noting that the 26 deals equated into an impressive \$12.9 million aggregated

capital investment made to-date by participating businesses. This amount only includes deals that were disclosed to BCP. In some cases, participants choose to share limited information about the deals that had been concluded. A list of successful deals can be found in Appendix 13.

Often times, contracts and deals were contemplated for points of comparison or, in some cases, initiated during the tour. A great deal of the equipment reviewed would require a sizeable capital expenditure, which often takes time, negotiation with banks and possible investors. Based off of the fall 2014 survey results, a significant number of participants reported deals were being considered or underway and we would expect to see more results in year four, even though the program has ended.

The lower than expected number of deals to date may mean further hand-holding, including program facilitated follow up may be necessary for future program consideration. U.S. investment financing instruments were reviewed with participants, but these as well are complicated and may require additional support from programming efforts for Kazakhstan business to take full advantage of these as well as Kazakhstan-based financial products.

Indicator No.	Component 2 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Y4 Actual
2.9	Percent of firms reporting to use learned experience for improving their management and/or business practices	N/A	N/A	85%	70%	85%	99%	No data available

The two tours in year four ended on November 21, 2014 which meant there was not sufficient time to access and measure the tour's impact on this element of the programming before closeout.

C. Component 3: Expansion and Enhancement of DAMU Web Portal

Indicator No.	Component 3 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Total
3.1	Number of training tools available via DAMU's website	4	1	6	0	10	0	1

Sixty-one online training videos were created through Component 3 activities and are currently available via DAMU's youtube channel. The videos are divided into two levels of eleven courses each and include introductions to entrepreneurship, marketing, financing, personnel management, and business information technology. These videos were not uploaded to DAMU's website due to changes in the strategic direction of the business portal. For links to the online training program, please see Appendix **Error! Reference source not found.**

Indicator No.	Component 3 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Total
3.2	Percent increase in the number of unique visitors to the DAMU website	30%	76%	30%	82.36%	30%	49.7%*	N/A

**This percentage was collected during October-November 2013. Component 3 activities ended in December 2013 so no more data was collected.*

According to DAMU, the annual growth in unique visitors accessing the DAMU site has been in the range of 70-75 percent per year in recent years. These results indicate that project support resulted in an increase over the norm by 15-20 percent especially in year one and two.

Indicator No.	Component 3 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Total
3.3	Percent increase in the number of unique visitors to the DAMU website's business training materials	30%	159%	30%	0	30%	61.3%*	N/A

**This percentage was collected during October-November 2013 only. Component 3 activities ended in December 2013 so no further data was collected.*

With regard to accessing the business training materials, visitors that are accessing the following page are tracked: <http://www.damu.kz/8209>. This page showed a significant increase in visits beginning in September 2012. Traffic increased to the site mostly from searches for “экспресс курс предпринимательства” (in English “express entrepreneurship course”) and “курсы фонд даму алматы” (in English, “Fund DAMU courses Almaty”), as well as an increase in some direct visits.

Indicator No.	Component 3 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Total
3.5	Number of downloads of project materials from the DAMU portal	500	4,003	500	1,135	1,000	No data available	5,138

Although significant work has been conducted on the implementation, the final online training program has not yet been released to the public, while the software that currently exists is outdated. This target indicator is expected to be achieved after the end of Component 3 activities and after the online training program is released and adequately popularized.

Indicator No.	Component 3 Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual
3.5	Percent of individuals including project participants who register and take on-line training via the DAMU portal	32	0	100	0	100	No data available

Although significant work has been conducted on the implementation, the final online training program has not yet been released to the public, while the software that currently exists is outdated. This target indicator is expected to be achieved after the end of Component 3 activities and after the online training program is released and adequately popularized.

D. USAID Standard Indicators

Indicator No.	USAID Standard Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Total
1	Number of person hours of training completed in private sector productive capacity supported by USG assistance by participating in business development tours	18,000	2,384	3,040	2,480	2,640	1,520	6,384

In year one, it was the responsibility of the Kazakhstani training institutes to hire and facilitate the trainings and for VEGA/IESC to recruit trainers. After proposing 28 trainers and only fielding 7, it was determined that this activity could be more efficient moving forward and that the target numbers of person hours of training should be adjusted for the subsequent years of the project to correspond with the number of trainers that could be fielded.

In year two, the selection of Turan Profi as the educational institute to facilitate the trainings was delayed until the fourth quarter, which was much later than originally anticipated and therefore the number of person hours trained during that year was less than expected. But, the additional trainings took place in the following fiscal year, year three of the project.

Indicator No.	USAID Standard Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Total
2	Number of person hours of training completed by males in private sector	9,000	1,430	1,960	1,720	1,720	1,000	4,150

	productive capacity supported by USG assistance by participating in business development tours							
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Of the total training hours, as indicated in the table below, 65 percent of the training hours benefited male participants and 35 percent benefited female participants. No further analysis on this difference is available, but for future programming, efforts to increase the number of women business owners or managers receiving this type of initiative will require more outreach or specific programming that relates more to women-owned and/or managed SMEs.

Indicator No.	USAID Standard Indicators	Y1 Target	Y1 Actual	Y2 Target	Y2 Actual	Y3 Target	Y3 Actual	Total
3	Number of person hours of training completed by females in private sector productive capacity supported by USG assistance by participating in business development tours	9,000	954	1,080	760	720	520	2,234

VI. The Role of Volunteer Experts

The volunteer experts leveraged their business experience and established networks to support many of the successful connections and insights gained by the participants. Over the life of the project, 77 volunteer assignments were completed. These donated services have contributed to over \$113,000 of cost share, exceeding expectations of \$91,645 of cost share assigned to the project. Below is a table listing the volunteer experts and the assignments completed.

Table 7. Volunteer Experts and Assignments

Fiscal Year	Volunteer Expert	Organization	Description of Assistance
2012	Gary Mutz	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Harold Handley	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Edward Tarpinian	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Donald Marshall	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Nancy McCasin	IESC	Participation in and advisory services for healthcare sector business development tour.
	Barry Thomas	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Sagheer Jan	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Gary Mutz	IESC	Business Training in Washington, DC for Information Technology Sector Business Development Tour Participants.
	Vincent Herman	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Edward Tarpinian	IESC	Business Training in Washington, DC for Health Sector Business Development Tour Participants.
	Harold Handley	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Vincent Herman	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Joan Lowell	CNFA	Review business applications for selection of agribusiness/agriculture business development tour participants.
	Irving Lowell	CNFA	Review business applications for selection of agribusiness/agriculture business development tour participants.
	Bryce Malsbary	CNFA	Review business applications for selection of agribusiness/agriculture business development tour participants.
	Bill Maltby	CNFA	Review business applications for selection of agribusiness/agriculture business development tour participants.
	Brian Doyle	CNFA	Review business applications for selection of agribusiness/agriculture business development tour

			participants.
	Thad Geiger	CNFA	Contributed to tour planning/design; participated in several weeks of the tour; arranged for contacts, connections, demonstrations and visits throughout the livestock industry in Kansas; mentored tour participants.
	Debra Frey	CNFA	Contributed to tour planning/design; arranged for contacts, connections, demonstrations and visits through Kansas State University.
	Michael Kelsey	CNFA	Contributed to tour planning/design; arranged for connections, demonstrations and visits with the livestock industry in Nebraska.
	Bruce Grogran, Roberto Lenton, Monica Norby, Marc Andreini, Chandran Achutan	CNFA	Arranged contacts/connections and provided resources on irrigation and water use resources at the Husker Harvest Days ag expo, in Nebraska and in Almaty.
	Larry Berger	CNFA	Provided assistance, connections and resources at the Husker Harvest Days ag expo.
	Tom Draper	CNFA	Provided assistance, connections and resources at the Husker Harvest Days ag expo.
	Rye Degarmo	CNFA	Provided demonstrations, contacts, sales and consulting information on grain and forage production machinery; off-site mentoring of tour participants.
	Ryan Haffner, Daniel Raucholz	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information on grain and forage production machinery; off-site mentoring of tour participants.
	Scott Beyer	CNFA	Provided contacts and resources on the poultry industry in Kansas and Missouri; off-site mentoring of tour participants.
	Galen and Megan Fink	CNFA	Provided contacts and other resources for breeding and genetics management, sales of semen, embryos and cattle; off-site mentoring of tour participants.
	Laman Mamedova	CNFA	Provided additional interpretation resources during meat processing facility tour.
	Oscar Fiestas-Tejada	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
2013	Pano Koutsoyannis	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Ihor Chorkawyj	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Safiy Eltawahlimi	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Joyce Perrin	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Vincent Herman	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Sanchayan Ratnathicam	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Mark Weber	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	John Murtagh	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.

2014	Carl Sherman	CNFA	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	John and J.L. Murtagh	CNFA	Business Training in Washington, DC for Construction Sector Business Development Tour Participants.
	Vincent Herman	CNFA	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Ann Savage	CNFA	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Bryan Doyle	CNFA	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Chad Bontrager	CNFA	Provided contacts and resources on baking/ milling industry.
	J.J. Jones	CNFA	Provided contacts and resources on baking/ milling industry.
	Bob Koch	CNFA	Provided tour planning assistance.
	Jeff Seeger	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Jay O'Neil	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Dave Krishock	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Sherrill Cropper	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Tom Sieloff	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Mike Brouk	CNFA	Provided a tour of KSU livestock facilities.
	Galen Hofman	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Nancy Hofman	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Chris Elliot	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Gordon McDaniel	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Gary Camarano	CNFA	Provided contacts, sales and consulting information.
	Diane Price	IESC	Business Training in Washington, DC for Healthcare Sector Business Development Tour Participants.
2014	Vincent Herman	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Daniel Butler	IESC	Business Training in Washington, DC for Information Technology Sector Business Development Tour Participants.
	Ashok Sadhwani	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Peter Furth	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Mark Weber	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Clarie Sand	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	John Willsie	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.

	Edward Valentine	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	John Murtagh	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Douglas Wilkins	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Harold Handley	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Ashok Sadhwani	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Robert Alexandriskiy	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Wanda Miglus	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Barbra Ende	IESC	Review business applications for business development tour selection of participants.
	Harold Handley	IESC	Business Training in Washington, DC for Food Industry Business Development Tour Participants.

VII. Challenges and Solutions

A. Component 1: Identify and Recruit Qualified Business Trainers

Component 1 was a small, yet still significant part of the project. The value of the trainings became more apparent towards the latter half of the project as participants appeared to realize how useful the training could be for them, particularly in preparing for business development tours to the U.S. Several key challenges related to training delivery are as follows:

Context of training related to overall curriculum. At times, the U.S. trainers found the overall curriculum provided by the Kazakhstani academic institutions was not focused directly on the American market and economy. Since the trainers were recruited because of their expertise and experience in the American markets, in some cases, the trainers were not certain that the knowledge they provided on U.S. markets was as applicable or useful to the overall training program objectives. Surveys were distributed at the end of each training so that project staff and recurring trainers could improve the next training session. Adjustments were made in an attempt to find an appropriate balance between discussing the Kazakhstani and American markets. The surveys and continued communication with the academic institutions allowed project team to better inform the trainer consultants of what to expect and what to focus on during the trainings.

U.S. trainers with previous Kazakhstan experience. Recruiting experienced, senior-level business trainers from non-oil sectors with previous, relevant experience working in Kazakhstan and/or speak fluent Russian was a challenge. The project focused more on recruiting business trainers who had extensive, sector-relevant experience in the U.S. market than for consultants with previous Kazakhstan business ties or Russian or Kazak language capacity. The project employed professional interpreters to translate simultaneously during the business training. Training materials were translated in advance of the trainings. Finally, when possible, the project utilized the same business trainer more than once, like Mr. Al Hamman. Trainers available to return to Kazakhstan demonstrated a firm understanding of what the beneficiaries needed based on the participant engagement, responses, and feedback from their previous experience.

The project did experience challenges with the level of service from some of the interpretations. This is in part because of the technical language needed for some of the specificity included in the training as well as cultural context of some of the words or ideas. When the shortcoming was determined to be due to interpreter skills, the project replaced the interpreter. Further, project staff provided interpreters more advance briefings on context and messages based on our project staff observations of previous sessions as Component 1 progressed.

B. Component 2: Develop and Conduct Business Development Tours

Component 2 represented an intense, three-week U.S. visit with diverse groups of beneficiaries. The differences included the large variety of businesses, even within the determined sector, as well as the size and sophistication of the businesses. The individual goals, competing goals of managing a business (or in some cases businesses), and being away from that business for a three-week period, also, presented challenges for Component 2. And further, the physical distance and cultural knowledge gaps between both the U.S. and Kazakhstan market actors. The component represented a significant investment by the funders as well as the individual businesses via their opportunity costs, while away from the day-to-day management duties. While some of the challenges were universal and, when possible, corrective actions taken for future programming efforts, a number of the challenges were unique or related to individual circumstances. Regardless, the project team sought to be accommodating, flexible, and proactive in the approach to each business development tour and to each participant's needs.

Timing. During the first year of the project, the Kazakhstani government's budget and contract tender process led to a delay of two additional months from the approved work plan schedule. This led to a shift in the timing of the business development tours to accommodate their schedule. The eventual extension of the project helped accommodate for any of the initial delays from the first year.

A weak work plan did not always mean that its author would be an ineffective participant. On the multiple readers' panel, many of the volunteer expert readers noted the weak business plans of some of the applicants. Applicants were encouraged to improve their business plans prior to traveling to the U.S.; however, the project found that weak business plans were not necessarily a hindrance to participants engaging their American counterparts and in some cases, signing business deals. Nevertheless, a strong business plan helps facilitate access to capital, confidence in investment, and optimal use of capital expenditures. Future program design may want to include additional program funding and technical assistance to assist with strengthening business planning among participants.

Opportunity cost. The business development tours are a three-week commitment and participants are absent from their businesses for all of that time. This could lead to a loss of productivity and lack of follow-through with the businesses they met with while in the U.S. when they return home. Future program design may want to consider shortened business development tours. Two weeks may be enough time for the participants to experience the business environment in the U.S., meet prospective partners, and still travel to multiple cities for those in-person connections.

Tour group diversity. During the tours, the project found that the participants represented were also very divergent in terms of their size, experience in international business, and business interests. One of the consistent criticisms, was related to the relevance of the meetings for the entire group. The project attempted to balance group meetings with one-on-one meetings whenever possible. In addition, the project programmed open time in the schedules for participants to pursue their specific areas of their business interests.

Securing correct information. In advance of the trip, participants are managing multiple priorities – family, business, and trip preparation. Sometimes finalists did not provide correct or complete information on the background of their business or the types of products or contacts they hope to see. The project ensured all participants received a manual well in advance of the trip and provided individual support to requests on guiding participants in reporting the data. Even so, there were often information or expectation gaps. The project contacted finalists multiple times in advance of the trip and used multiple tools; e.g. telephone, e-mail, written letters. Future programming needs to take into account the significant preparation assistance needed, in many parts, due the competing priorities of busy entrepreneurs. Along these lines, business advisor meetings at business sites to help assess and document with the participant how business goals may be met with U.S. business connections would also enhance program outputs, but would also increase the cost per participant considerably.

Participant advance preparation. Many participants did not read their pre-departure orientation guides and had concerns or questions that were addressed in the guides. As above, this is not completely unexpected given other priorities so the project team reviewed the guides verbally during the in-person pre-departure orientation meetings. Also, the project arranged for first-hand testimonials from previous tour participants at the pre-departure orientation, which intended to make some of the written guidance come alive via real examples. The alumni presentations were well received by participants.

Capturing participant feedback. At first, tour surveys were distributed after the trip was completed, resulting in only 50 to 75 percent of participants providing written feedback. The project adjusted by developing two mid-tour evaluation surveys completed while participants were still on the tour. This gave project staff nearly a real-time beneficiary perspective on any challenges or progress during each part of the tour, which could inform the next leg of the tour. Back in Kazakhstan, the project followed up with alumni via one-on-one interviews, a full participant survey, and via alumni events to capture further feedback and monitor impact.

C. Component 3: Expansion and Enhancement of DAMU Web Portal

Clear objectives. Prior to project implementation, the online training application lacked clear objectives; therefore, the resulting product that DAMU received from a third-party web development company was subpar. The product did not meet the needs of the DAMU fund and in the end rejected as a viable tool. With DAMU, the project established detailed technical requirements outlining the scope of work and the logic and functionality. This is an important lesson for future efforts similar to this initiative.

Deadlines. Deadlines had to be adjusted to accommodate shifts in the schedule of video recording. The participating volunteers were not professionals; therefore, a number of reading errors occurred, which required additional editing. While the consultant team considered this to be a setback, the additional editing solved the problem. Delays and additional editing in production do increase the cost, which should be kept in mind when analyzing cost elements and anticipated resources (e.g. volunteers versus technical professionals).

Virtual collaboration. Consultants worked remotely after trips to Kazakhstan, which was less ideal than working in-person with their counterparts. Clarity in knowledge transfer was through sharing action plan reports, generating guidelines, and developing manuals designed specifically for the DAMU and the activities targeted audience. For future program designs of this nature, budgeting more in-person consulting time may create an efficiency in understanding and support initial coaching required of capacity building.

VIII. Recommendations

This section includes lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations realized under the project, which may help inform future programming design.

Returning business trainers (Component 1). For general business training related to approaching the U.S. market, advance planning to ensure a project veteran, well received business trainer returns allows for continuously improving and tailored curriculum. Language skills and prior knowledge of Kazakhstan are preferred, but training experience related to accessing the U.S. market is more important provided budget is allotted for professional interpreters. The business trainer could also provide advance trip assessment and customized guidance at some businesses sites directly to help better prepare beneficiaries traveling on the business development tour. This would require additional time and domestic travel with those related costs.

More rigorous business tour participant selection (Component 2). The project would benefit from a larger pool of candidates with similar business types within the sector. An increased pool of candidates would likely ensure a better, more competitive selection process of candidates more ready for such a tour. A wider pool of candidates would also increase the likelihood of capturing a group with similar goals and business interests. This may mean a smaller number of people per tour (e.g. eight to ten). The project found that even when grouped within the sector, the business similarities were few if non-existent.



By travelling to the U.S. through the Business Connection Project, Kazakhstani entrepreneurs were able to meet face-to-face with American business owners and form working relationships.

Greater inclusion of women-business owners and directors (Component 2). The program benefited from the participation of impressive women business owners and managers on each and every one of the business development tour. That said women generally included about 35 percent of beneficiaries. A future program design would benefit from determining what is a viable, realistic, and an ideal target for gender inclusion. Additional outreach and specifically designed program elements could be developed. These targeted efforts may take additional time, cost additional money, and may not produce the type of results at the level sought for the general aggregate due to several historic reasons (experience in overseas markets, size of business, age of business, market plans). Further, the opportunity cost and business risk assessment need to ensure that programming efforts designed to help women entrepreneurs do not harm those same entrepreneurs by making recommendations that are not appropriate and take away from existing profit-making endeavors. Nevertheless, further inclusion of women entrepreneurs and managers are important in programming intended to advance business opportunities for all Kazakhstan SME's in non-oil based sectors.

Determining the tour focus in advance of the recruiting process (Component 2). Alternatively or in addition to the above recommendation, the business development tour design may have benefited from

specific topic selection (e.g. green energy, restaurant franchising, or IT business process enhancements). After determining the topic and dates, seek applicable applicants. In this way, the applicants are self-selecting versus the project staff trying to find a unifying, but broadly stated and planned sector theme for the applications received.

More advanced, direct technical assistance (Component 2). Some of the participants, especially those without previous U.S. and/or limited international business or personal travel would benefit from more pre-departure direct assistance. Such assistance includes an extensive review of their business processes and plans to look at capital investment, product diversification, and purchasing/financing options. Determining price point return on investments for example, can help inform the individual strategy and drive the participant's motivation. As mentioned under the first recommendation, in some cases this assistance could be provided by the business trainer. However, in other cases, depending upon the needs of the beneficiaries, a more directly applicable business advisor may be required.

Shorter-tours (Component 2). Future project designs should consider shortening the business development tours from three weeks to two weeks. A shorter period may make it easier for business owners to be absent from their businesses.

Kickoff in Washington, DC (Component 2). Having Washington, DC, as the point of entry for each tour served as a best practice. It is the headquarters for many relevant organizations and associations as well as the Embassy of Kazakhstan, which greeted each group. In a two-week trip versus the three-week trip, time in DC would need to be reduced accordingly, but the project recommends future designs continue to use the city as the starting point, having the participants arrive on Friday so to have the weekend to adjust to the time change.



Interpreter, Ms. Dina Hennessey, translates a tour of Brandywine Trucks in Maryland and helps participants communicate with the American owner.

Professional interpreters a must (Component 2). The communication barrier is one of the biggest barriers to successful U.S. and Kazakhstan business exchanges. Hiring quality, professional interpreters in sufficient numbers is important to program success. The interpreters helped participants feel more comfortable during business meetings and provided not only language, but important cultural insight. Participants often trusted the interpreters to correctly convey their responses and questions to the U.S. business. The interpreters hired had worked on business development tours similar to

this previously and were familiar with the technical language of the program. Simultaneous interpretation for groups moving around the country, with flexibility to work longer days when

necessary, and to cover events such as trade shows and individual meetings is an important cost factor that future programs should not underestimate.

Measurement related to beneficiary website effectiveness (Component 3). Key performance indicators for determining the website's achievement of its business goals should be simple, relevant and timely. If metrics are hard to interpret, irrelevant, no longer contribute towards the goals, cannot be obtained in a timely manner, or are not actionable they are either replaced or put aside. Ideal metrics answer

business questions and allow action. For example, the effectiveness of a promotional campaign on a news site, in YouTube, Facebook or on Twitter can be measured by the campaign conversion rate, or the number of users who take the desired action (clicking, registering, donating, subscribing, etc.). The rate is an accurate measure of the success of a given campaign. Another performance measure is user traffic (where your site visitors come from, both geographically and digitally). Another good metric is bounce rate, which is one of the key measures in Google Analytics. This calculates how many of web users click away from the site after viewing just one page.

Because visitors come to a website with various intentions, measuring conversions will only capture that the site served its purpose for 20 to 30 percent of visitors. The task completion rate helps determine the reason for low conversion rates and measures customer satisfaction. This indicator is usually estimated by a site-level survey that is integrated toward the end of the campaign. It may include simple questions, such as

- Why did you visit our site today? or
- Were you able to find what you needed?

If the majority of visitors to DAMU.kz are looking for a business plan, but only 10 to 20 percent of them are finding that assistance, then the website managers can adjust accordingly.

This activity started and activated a site-level survey using a popular online marketing tool called KissInsight. With the free plan, it allows to view up to 100 responses; however, within two days the level of responses rose to approximately 300. With a small budget it is possible to upgrade the service to view the rest of the responses and find out what are people doing on DAMU.kz.

Continual improvement to the website, DAMU.kz. Overall numbers of visitors and their actions on the site based only on the clickstream analysis gives limited information about the visitor intentions, maybe only by the keywords. Surveys are great tools to listen to site visitors. Surveys can be site level to improve overall site navigation, service level, structural level, and page level to improve the page content. Mr. Kamal Mamedov of DAMU started the practice of running site level surveys. For example, based on the survey results, many people visiting DAMU.kz were looking for different types of business plans. DAMU uploaded new types of business plans to meet the needs. Suggestions to increase effectiveness of DAMU.kz serviced to its visitors include the following:

1. Modify KPIs to make them actionable and discover areas of problems to act upon (e.g. setting KPIs such as conversion rate, task completion rate, etc.);
2. Run a site level surveys on Task Completion Rate (this task had started April 29, 2013);
3. Configure four to five goals in Google Analytics to measure the conversions for micro and macro conversions (this task started 30 April);
4. Optimize pages provide value to visitors and calls to action (this is ongoing task. The recommendations from the past were not implemented due to resource scarcity);
5. Continue asking visitors questions using surveys to improve their experience with the website on an ongoing basis (this task started already using KissInsight online survey tool).

IX. Appendices

Due to file size limitations, the appendix documents referenced in this report have been submitted separately via Dropbox file sharing. Below is the list of documents:

- 1. Business Connections Project Achievements Dashboard**
- 2. Trainer Al Hamman PowerPoint Presentation**
- 3. Textile Sector Business Development Tour Itinerary (English)**
- 4. Industrial Manufacturing Sector Business Development Tour Itinerary (English)**
- 5. Textile Sector Business Development Tour Itinerary (Russian)**
- 6. Industrial Manufacturing Sector Business Development Tour Itinerary (Russian)**
- 7. Complete List of Tour Participants FY 2012 to 2014**
- 8. Monitoring Report for Food Industry, Textile, and Industrial Manufacturing Business Development Tours**
- 9. Business Development Tour Summary (Russian)**
- 10. Entrepreneurs Implementing Best Practices**
- 11. Alumni Booklet (English)**
- 12. Alumni Booklet (Russian)**
- 13. List of Business Development Tour Successful Deals**
- 14. Life of Project Performance Monitoring Indicator Table**
- 15. Component 3: Online Training Program**